

# Soul-Roulette

Transmutations of Nerval



by Retorico Unentesi

with an extensive Appendix



# **SOUL-ROULETTE**

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*with an extensive Appendix*

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# CONTENTS

## Front Matter

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Forward .....                     | 5 |
| Preface by John Dryden .....      | 6 |
| Introduction by Lupi d'Cort ..... | 7 |

## Soul-roulette

|                                                                  |    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Retorico Unentesi, <i>The Hinge of Pools 1 – 6</i> .....         | 9  |
| Gerard de Nerval, <i>Le Roi de Thulé</i> .....                   | 17 |
| Gerard de Nerval, <i>Le Réveil en voiture</i> .....              | 19 |
| Retorico Unentesi, <i>Here is what I saw</i> (Variation 1) ..... | 21 |
| Retorico Unentesi, <i>Here is what I saw</i> (Variation 2) ..... | 23 |
| Gerard de Nerval, <i>VERS DORÉS</i> .....                        | 24 |
| Retorico Unentesi, <i>GOLDEN TOOTH</i> .....                     | 25 |

# Appendix

|                                                                                         |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Jim Leftwich, TRANSDUCING LIBERATION, Introduction                                      |    |
| to Prime Sway, by John M. Bennett, 1995 .....                                           | 28 |
| Jim Leftwich, letter to Jake Berry, 1996 .....                                          | 34 |
| Jim Leftwich, letter, to Scott MacLeod, 1997 .....                                      | 37 |
| Jim Leftwich, letter, to Scott MacLeod, 1997 .....                                      | 37 |
| Jim Leftwich, letter, to Scott MacLeod, 1997 .....                                      | 38 |
| Jack Foley on Zukofsky's homeophonic translation of Catullus .....                      | 42 |
| Ron Silliman on David Melnick's Men In Aida .....                                       | 45 |
| Robert Kelly, footnote to Path Moss, pp. 115 - 116, Chain 4, 1996 .....                 | 47 |
| Jerome Rothenberg, from Total Translation .....                                         | 50 |
| Jerome Rothenberg, from Translation as Composition / Composition as Translation .....   | 51 |
| Jerome Rothenberg, From The New Delta Interview (Part Two):                             |    |
| Translating, Sequencing, Performing .....                                               | 52 |
| from <i>Translating Translating Apollinaire: A Preliminary Report</i> by bpNichol ..... | 53 |
| Ian MacFadyen, Magic Amulet / Silence to Say Goodbye .....                              | 60 |
| Ivan Argüelles, from JOHN M. BENNETT, INNOVATIVE,                                       |    |
| EXPERIMENTAL AND UNIQUE (2014) .....                                                    | 63 |
| Marco Giovenale & Jim Leftwich, from Four questions about asemic writing, 2015 .....    | 63 |

## Foreword

It does not at all trouble me that the Grammarians perhaps will not suffer this libertine way of rendring foreign Authors, to be called Translation; for I am not so much enamoured of the Name Translator, as not to wish rather to be Something Better, though it want yet a Name. I speak not so much all this, in defence of my maner of Translating, or Imitating (or what other Title they please) the two ensuing Odes of Pindar; for that would not deserve half these words, as by this occasion to rectifie the opinion of divers men upon this matter. The Psalms of David (which I believe to have been in their Original, to the Hebrews of his time, though not to our Hebrews of Buxtorfius his making, the most exalted pieces of Poesie) are a great example of what I have said; all the Translators of which (even Mr. Sands himself; for in despight of popular error, I will be bold not to except him) for this very reason, that they have not sought to supply the lost Excellencies of another Language with new ones in their own; are so far from doing honour, or at least justice to that Divine Poet, that, methinks, they revile him worse then Shimei. And Buchanan himself (though much the best of them all, and indeed a great Person) comes in my opinion no less short of David, then his Countrey does of Judaea. Upon this ground, I have in these two Odes of Pindar taken, left out, and added what I please; nor make it so much my aim to let the Reader know precisely what he spoke, as what was his way and manner of speaking; which has not been yet (that I know of) introduced into English, though it be the noblest and highest kind of writing in Verse; and which might, perhaps, be put into the List of Pancirollus, among the lost Inventions of Antiquity.

Abraham Cowley, from Preface "Pindarique Odes" (1656)

## **Preface by John Dryden**

All Translation, I suppose, may be reduced to these three heads:

First, that of Metaphrase, or turning an Author Word by Word, and Line by Line, from one Language into another. Thus, or near this manner, was Horace his Art of Poetry translated by Ben Johnson. The second way is that of Paraphrase, or Translation with Latitude, where the Author is kept in view by the Translator, so as never to be lost, but his words are not so strictly follow'd as his sense; and that too is admitted to be amplified, but not alter'd. Such is Mr. Waller's Translation of Virgil's Fourth Æneid. The Third way is that of Imitation, where the Translator (if now he has not lost that Name) assumes the liberty, not only to vary from the words and sence, but to forsake them both as he sees occasion; and taking only some general hints from the Original, to run division on the Ground-work, as he pleases. Such is Mr. Cowley's practice in turning two Odes of Pindar, and one of Horace, into English.

John Dryden, from his Preface Concerning Ovid's Epistles (1680)

## Introduction by Lupi d'Cort

from A HANDFUL OF THE UNREAD

Retorico Unentesi is a rigorously procedural poet. Jasper Johns is his model.

"the Unentesi formula:

1. take a text
2. do something to it
3. do something else to it"

(from "The Incarcerated Text: Property, Theft and Resistance in the Poetry of Retorico Unentesi"; Lupi d'Cort; unpublished manuscript.)

Unentesi is a self-proclaimed revolutionary, an anarchist and (at least theoretically) a pacifist. He would situate his oeuvre in the tradition of political (protest) poetry. As text on the page, however, his is a gentle and lyrical practice. All of the language in Unentesi is appropriated (thus his contention that he has written nothing). The collaged fragments of pilfered lines constellate at the nexus of list and lyric. Unentesi's posturing as a revolutionary poet is ultimately empty, but his aggregates of appropriated lines often exhibit an ear for uncanny accidents of rhythmic assonance.

(From an unpublished interview with Retorico Unentesi:)

d'Cort: "Your work would seem to enact a radically participatory sense of poetical community. Would it be fair to"

Unentesi: "I participate in nothing! If one wishes to be fair, one must say that I have written nothing. I am a cultural worker. I am a distributor of textual fragments, neither more nor less. Every sense of poetical community is constructed by the dominant culture as a means of controlling poetical response and responsibility. This is why I reside here in Kohoutenberg, at the Institute. Only here can I productively assert that I do nothing and do not exist."

p. 7,

<https://ia800204.us.archive.org/21/items/KOHOUTENBERGTEXTS/KOHOUTENBERG%20TEXTS.pdf>

--actually written in 1998, roughly eight and a half years after its (fictional) publication date on Scott MacLeod's blog

**Gerard de Nerval**  
**The Hinge of Pools**

6 translations by Retorico Unentesi

(2015)

1.

He was a Wing of Tools  
Whole his faithful cover  
Bequeathed, as a pentimento offer,  
A gristled golden cup.

It was a treasure grove full of harm  
Where his dove was reserved:  
Each time he ranked it  
His eyes spilled with ears.

Seeing his clast days dome,  
He divided his insurance agents  
But excepted shaving,  
Cutting, heretical clear memory.

He fades at the loyal table  
The bare bones spit in his tower;  
Standing abound and tiny,  
Hone his vocal mobility.

Thunder, the balcony folded the sea!  
The old king hisses in silence,  
He shrinks, - quivering, and his hand-lice  
The golden coup butter afloat!

He sawed her in half in the black water,  
The crave sauce by opening accounts,  
The king bent his whale tomorrow ...  
Fever claw hymn no more shrinking.

**2.**

He was a Hinge of Pools  
Whole his faithful clover  
Bequeathed, as a pimento coffer,  
A bristling golden cope.

It was a measure groove full of harm  
Where his drove was deserved:  
Each time he banked it  
His eyes pilled with fears.

Seeing his lost days roam,  
He divided his resurgent argent  
But excepted pasting,  
Cutting, having a clear memory.

He wades at the lifting table  
The bare bones split in his lawnmower;  
Standing bound and toner,  
Telephone his vocal mobility.

Thunder, the balloon folded the seal!  
The old hinge kisses in silence,  
He shrimps, - quivering, and his hand-lice  
The golden soups flutter and goat!

He saved her a calf in the black water,  
The brave sauce by opening veins,  
The king spent his yard sale tomorrow ...  
Sever law him no more blinking.

### 3.

He was a Binge of Drools  
Hole old faithful cleaver  
Bequeathed, as a pinto coffin,  
A bustling golden soap.

It was a miser grit full of harm  
Where his drive-by was deserved:  
Beach time he bunked it  
His eyes polled with beers.

Peeing his ghost days loam,  
He divided his emergent gargles  
But excepted posting,  
Butting, having a leer memory.

He wades at the lifting table  
The rare runes spilt in his lawnmower;  
Standing mound and loner,  
Tarotplane his local mobility.

Blunder, the bald loon folded the meal!  
The old hinge pisses in silence,  
He slumps, - quivering, and his band-mice  
The molten soups mutter and bloat!

He waved her an elf in the black water,  
The rave sauce by opening brains,  
The king spent his yard stale marrow ...  
Leverage lawns him no more slinking.

#### 4.

He was a Wing of  
Whole his faithful  
Bequeathed, as a pentimento  
A gristled golden  
It was a treasure grove full of  
Where his dove was  
Each time he ranked  
His eyes spilled with  
Seeing his clast days

He divided his insurance  
But excepted  
Cutting, heretical clear  
He fades at the loyal  
The bare bones spit in his  
Standing abound and  
Hone his vocal  
Thunder, the balcony folded the  
The old king hisses in  
He shrinks, - quivering, and his  
The golden coup butter  
He sawed her in half in the black  
The crave sauce by opening  
The king bent his whale  
Fever claw hymn no more

**5.**

was a Hinge of Pools  
his faithful clover  
as a pimento coffer,  
bristling golden cope.  
was a measure groove full of harm  
his drove was deserved:  
time he banked it  
eyes pilled with fears.

his lost days roam,  
divided his resurgent argent  
excepted pasting,  
having a clear memory.  
wades at the lifting table  
bare bones split in his lawnmower;  
bound and toner,  
his vocal mobility.  
the balloon folded the seal!  
old hinge kisses in silence,  
shrimps, - quivering, and his hand-lice  
golden soups flutter and goat!  
saved her a calf in the black water,  
brave sauce by opening veins,  
king spent his yard sale tomorrow ...  
law him no more blinking.

## 6.

Drools He was a Binge of  
cleaver Hole old faithful  
coffin Bequeathed, as a pinto,  
soap A bustling golden.  
harm It was a miser grit full of  
deserved Where his drive-by was:  
it Beach time he bunked

beers His eyes polled with.  
loam Peeing his ghost days,  
gargles He divided his emergent  
posting But excepted,  
memory Butting, having a leer.  
table He wades at the lifting  
lawnmower The rare runes spilt in his;  
loner Standing mound and,  
mobility Tarotplane his local.  
meal Blunder, the bald loon folded the!  
silence The old hinge pisses in,  
band-mice He slumps, - quivering, and his  
bloat The molten soups mutter and!  
water He waved her an elf in the black,  
brains The rave sauce by opening,  
marrow The king spent his yard stale...  
slinking Leverage lawns him no more.

*Gerard de Nerval*

## Le Roi de Thulé

Il était un roi de Thulé  
À qui son amante fidèle  
Léguait, comme souvenir d'elle,  
Une coupe d'or ciselé.

C'était un trésor plein de charmes  
Où son amour se conservait :  
À chaque fois qu'il y buvait  
Ses yeux se remplissaient de larmes.

Voyant ses derniers jours venir,  
Il divisa son héritage  
Mais il excepta du partage  
La coupe, son cher souvenir.

Il fit à la table royale  
Asseoir les barons dans sa tour ;  
Debout et rangée alentour,  
Brillait sa noblesse loyale.

Sous le balcon grondait la mer.  
Le vieux roi se lève en silence,  
Il boit, — frissonne, et sa main lance  
La coupe d'or au flot amer !

Il la vit tourner dans l'eau noire,  
La vague en s'ouvrant fit un pli,  
Le roi pencha son front pâli...  
Jamais on ne le vit plus boire.



**Gérard de Nerval**  
**Le Réveil en voiture & VERS DORÉS**

transmuted by Retorico Unentesi

(2016)

*Gérard de Nerval*

## **Le Réveil en voiture**

Voici ce que je vis : Les arbres sur ma route  
Fuyaient mêlés, ainsi qu'une armée en déroute,  
Et sous moi, comme ému par les vents soulevés,  
Le sol roulait des flots de glèbe et de pavés !

Des clochers conduisaient parmi les plaines vertes  
Leurs hameaux aux maisons de plâtre, recouvertes  
En tuiles, qui trottaient ainsi que des troupeaux  
De moutons blancs, marqués en rouge sur le dos !

Et les monts enivrés chancelaient, - la rivière  
Comme un serpent boa, sur la vallée entière  
Étendu, s'élançait pour les entortiller...  
— J'étais en poste, moi, venant de m'éveiller !

*Gerard de Nerval*

**Here is what I saw (Variation 1)**

transmuted by Retorico Unentesi

Here is what I saw: arbitrary voice-cues  
Surmount the trees in Fukushima melee  
Fleeing mixed, and a deflated army,  
Eats soup with the common emu, under me,

As movies by the winds braised, a  
Soul-roulette, the ground roiling waves  
And clods beneath the pavement!

Owls lied among green clocks condiment  
Their hamsters blaster house, cowered  
Tiles, which were rotting the locks  
Dream croutons, marked in red on the beach!

And rippling Mountains swallow - the River  
- Like Ouroboros! - in the valley! -  
Salon of the Cat Tortilla...  
- I was stationed, far from waking me!



*Gerard de Nerval*

## **Here is what I saw (Variation 2)**

transmuted by Retorico Unentesi

Here is what I saw: arbitrary voice-index  
Surmounts the harbors in Fukushima melee  
Fleeing mixed, and an army of dragonflies  
Manages soup at the emu commune, under me,

As communists film the winds braised, a  
Soul-roulette, the sun vaguely rolling,  
Eat your words against the chassis!

Caribou parliament among green clocks condiment  
Their hamsters blaster house, recuperate the  
Seagulls, which were rusting the percolators  
Riven croutons, marked rouge and surly plague!

And undulating Mountains organelle - the River  
- Common Ouroboros! - dancing in the valley! -  
Salon of the Tortilla Chatroom...  
- I was the postal lion, far from revealing me!

|||||

*Gérard de Nerval*

## **VERS DORÉS**

Eh quoi ! tout est sensible !

*Pythagore.*

Homme, libre penseur ! te crois-tu seul pensant  
Dans ce monde où la vie éclate en toute chose ?  
Des forces que tu tiens ta liberté dispose,  
Mais de tous tes conseils l'univers est absent.

Respecte dans la bête un esprit agissant :  
Chaque fleur est une âme à la Nature éclore ;  
Un mystère d'amour dans le métal repose ;  
« Tout est sensible ! » Et tout sur ton être est puissant.

Crains, dans le mur aveugle, un regard qui t'épie :  
À la matière même un verbe est attaché...  
Ne la fais pas servir à quelque usage impie !

Souvent dans l'être obscur habite un Dieu caché ;  
Et comme un œil naissant couvert par ses paupières,  
Un pur esprit s'accroît sous l'écorce des pierres !

*Gerard de Nerval*

## **GOLDEN TOOTH**

transmuted by Retorico Unentesi

Say What!? everything is sensible!

*Pythagoras.*

Oh Man, a free thinker! So you think you're the thin  
king? In this world where life bursts into everything?  
Forces you fold your freedom fasts,  
But consonants tease the universe in your absence.

Respect the beast in its spiral spirit agile:  
Checkered flowers are the name of a Nature enclosed;  
A mysterious love sleeps in the metal rose;  
"Everything is sensible!" Our trout surf tones  
gain entry through your percussion!

Fear is the blank wall who looks like a spy to you:  
Matter is a verb and memory is your adverb...  
Never serve a useless purpose in a pie!

The gods hide their obscurity in a soup vent cache;  
The eye is an oily comet, covert, parsed by paupers,  
A purling spirit accrues in the encore of our pairs!



# **APPENDIX**

*Jim Leftwich*

## **TRANSDUCING LIBERATION**

Introduction to *Prime Sway*, by John M. Bennett

1995

Transduction is reading strategy as writing procedure. Clark Coolidge has written that, finally, he doesn't want to know whether he is reading or writing; Bennett wants to know the two activities as one process.

Reading and writing both participate in the process of meaning-building, normally an asymmetrical power relationship, with the author having the upper hand. Ron Silliman, in responding to Tom Beckett's suggestion that he contextualize his *Sunset Debris* (a poem composed entirely of questions), said "every sentence is supposed to remind the reader of her or his inability to respond." In Bennett, every syllable is intended to remind the reader of his or her freedom to response.

Susan Smith Nash has written that "for Language poets, the meaning-building process is interesting because it foregrounds the culturally-based knowledge or value-systems that the reader employs in order to arrive at an interpretation." For Bennett, there is an added dimension of individual empowerment and liberation, in which the reader is invited to share fully in the creative process.

Bennett's transduction of Sor Juana's *Primero Sueño* was written, he has said, by "pretending I don't know Spanish and writing it out (reading it) as if it were English." This process arises from "an interest or attention paid to speech and hand writing as 'texts' full of meanings

that have nothing to do with linguistics. I often read, or try to read, printed texts that way, too" (letter, 9/14/94). With transduction, the reader-as-writer has reversed the conventional asymmetrical power relationship inherent in the reading process, and has, at least by implication, eliminated the asymmetry from further reading experiences. With transduction, the reader assumes the role of writer during the activity of reading, and in doing so frees other readers to make the same choice, to reject the submissive role of reader and also to refuse the dominant role of writer, choosing to work instead in the new hybrid capacity of reader / creator.

In his interview with Beckett, Silliman said, "as advertisers have known for decades, the process of consuming information is an act of submission. To have read these words is to have had these thoughts, which were not your own." But if the need for consuming information is removed from the process of reading, and is replaced by the opportunity for creating new writing, then the act of submission is removed from the process, and to have read these, or any other, words is to have participated fully in an ongoing chaotic affirmation of meaning-building. The social contract between reader and writer is, in its conventional terms, voided, and a new declaration of collaborative independence is proclaimed. At the same time, the interdependence of reader and writer is enlivened, a vital link established, a connection, or pattern of connections, is determined, and the reading process is encouraged as an affirmation of our common participation in creation. As Bennett has written in a letter, "what I do is primarily a kind of paying attention to the (perhaps) random patterns that cross one's

path (or that one throws down on it) to see what's there. I find though that the process of doing that has ethical or moral or psychic results: it enhances one's perception of things, events, and -- most important -- other people in one's life, increases one's capacity for empathy. I think reading, if one pays attention to the reading, probably has the same effect -- though in my case at least, it's most pronounced through the process of writing" (Letter, 10/23/94).

Transduction is the process of applying more memory to a text than it is designed to accommodate, or it is the process of applying inappropriate sets of memory to a text, as when Bennett reads Sor Juana's Spanish while utilizing his memory of English and ignoring his memory of Spanish, so that what one gets is a layered reading, the Spanish providing a palimpsest over which one reads the imagined English version, or, perhaps, the English version acting as a palimpsest and the reading as a revealing of its hidden meanings (Bennett has said that in writing *Prime Sway*, his transduction of *Primero Sueño*, some amazing things were "revealed") so that the newly written text is a sort of textual record of a divinatory practice, documentation of a variety of stichtomancy, and the new text is presented as a situation -- not as an object -- in which the reader is invited to participate fully, freed from the restrictions of conventional reader / writer relationships.

Bennett has said that "an attitude of receptivity is how to go about this -- & not a bad way to approach writing in general". The reader engages the text willing to encounter what is there. The page functions as a layered field of signification and the reader enters into patterns

which emerge and are revealed and out of which is created the new work. An attitude of receptivity to what is there, on the page, increases the range of possibilities available through reading, and eliminates the need to rely on preconceived notions concerning what one should find there, what one can expect to find there, what one is expected to find there, what one can safely assume will be found there. The text being read is, as Jung has written about the I Ching yarrow sticks, an integral part of the moment in which it is encountered, and perceived as such it forms part of the larger pattern of the present, another part of that pattern being the reader, and there the reader and the written unfold, increase, come to include one another, as the intrinsic creativity of the moment is encountered. Bennett has said that the “divinatory aspects of these practices are related to our curiosity as to whether there is any pattern or ‘meaning’ to the universe that goes beyond -- is more fundamental than, our rational explorations toward that end.”

Bennett's poems do not read like Language texts, but the reading strategies one employs, and the results of these strategies, are in some ways quite similar. Bennett achieves a sort of disjunction through the use of multiple parenthetical phrase clusters, for example, and, with his use of the ambiguous apostrophe s, which serves to arrest the rhythmic flow of a line while the reader considers numerous possible meanings for the word being read, Bennett presents the word -- not the line or phrase -- as the primary unit of composition, and the focal point of our reading, creating the effect of a line of words in series, so that the intrasentential organizing principle is not that of

linear sequence, but is that of serial patterning, a parasyntactical array of polysemous units. Once this is recognized, and entered, the necessity for reading top-left to bottom-right is eliminated; we might, as a first reading, follow the conventional steps through the poem, then begin to read it as a page-as-field composition.

Bennett's lines, however, can also be scanned according to conventional metrical procedures, though his punctuation and line-breaks make such a reading more complicated than is usually the case. There is a polyrhythmic dimension to his work which seems almost to be grounded in the somatic polyrhythms of, for example, the pulmonary, the cardiovascular, and the neural, so that the sense of multiple rhythms as always present seems rooted in and emphasized by his use of body-oriented imagery. What occurs is a polyrhythmic ensemble performance, the lines acting as a sort of bass line, the segmenting devices effecting a sort of collective improvisation on this pattern.

Bennett's rime schemes are internal and irregular, and enhance the sense of page-as-field patterning, causing the reader to jump from one line to another, to read vertically in both directions without the constrictions of left-to-right progression. In a conventional poem, a reader would not be encouraged to dismantle the normative structure of the reading pattern, but in the context of a Bennett poem, one is led to consider recombinative strategies.

When reading Bennett's calligraphy, this sense is even more

pronounced. Having transliterated one word, the reader is frequently persuaded by the next word or phrase to go back and reconsider, re-transliterate, then to include numerous variant readings in the final understanding of the poem. The added visual dimension enhances the polysemous experience of the text. As Bennett wrote in his response to the CORE questionnaire, “hopefully, as with all art, the readers / viewers of visual poetry would have their awareness of possibility expanded by the work, and their sense of connectedness with what is. This should stimulate their sense of responsibility, their commitment to love, their humility, and so on...”

Bennett’s poems invite serial reading, which, as Charles Bernstein has noted, opens a work to recombination. Distillation and recombination are central to the encounter with Bennett’s poems. A transduction distills from a given text an elixir -- not in any sense an essence --, word-by-word, or phrase-by-phrase, proceeding by a sort of homonymic or euphonic improvisation, playing among the correspondences of sounds, and the distilled units are then recombined to produce the new poems. The reader is invited to engage in similar processes of distillation and recombination when reading the transductions, so that the asymmetry of the meaning-building process is shifted in favor of the reader, undermining the conventional power relationship of writer to reader. In *Infused*, a recent [1994] sequence of poems, Bennett reads his own work backwards -- though not exactly backwards, he notes in a letter --, thereby foregrounding the process of recombination and offering the reader a new poem to be read in the spirit of receptivity and through a

process of recombination.

Taking all of this one step further, Bennett offers his poems to other poets to be “improved” through collaboration. The project is unending. The process is as open and as generous as any we are likely to encounter. Silliman has written that “form is of interest only to the extent that it empowers liberation.” If the same is said of procedure -- and it should be -- then John Bennett’s project is as significant as any we will find in current poetical practice.

|||||

***Jim Leftwich, letter to Jake Berry***

1996

In thinking about the practical applications of Abulafia, for making poems, I come up first with the idea of using anagrams, as a beginning, as an extension of his concept of letter combinations. From there it's a logical step to consider cognates, etymologies, to deepen the semantics. An anagrammatic base provides the musical foundations, but that has to be taken somewhere, has to be compressed, made to cohere, to some degree, and etymologies seem to provide a good starting point for that. From there my tendency is towards a sort of improvisation, associating off of the music,

and off of the etymologies, along the lines of what Edmund Jabes has called "interrogating the surface of the text". What seems to happen, in many instances, is that the anagrammatic relationships mutate into paragrams, one letter changed in a word opening to possibilities for both music and meaning, as when word becomes world, that kind of thing. I just finished reading Walter Redfern's book called *PUNS*, something I stumbled upon through serendipity at the UVA library. He can be fairly humorous in his treatment of the subject: "Transgression, overlap, approximation. The last named is built into the Greek word paronomasia (naming alongside, providing near-relative to). One near-relative to paronomasia, coincidentally, is the rare word paronomesis, which means illegality. Paragram is the term for a play on words involving the alteration of one or more letters - one of the commonest forms of punning. Hughes and Hammond use the term 'assonant pun' for this variety (as in 'there's a vas deferens between children and no children') which is both self-evident, tautological, and yet rams a point home. Paronym is another word for such near-misses (or transvestites)." Maybe a little excessive, but in some ways a nice balance for the sort of speculations we can get into if we develop this line of thinking from considerations of Abulafia. From another angle, Steve McCaffery articulates the post-structuralist, language-centered position on the subject: "The paragramme, as a non-intentional disposition within the written, helps constitute the paralogical and contradictory nature of the intentional. Moreover, it is usually transphenomenal and not experienced as such in conventional reading habits. Yet a perspectival readjustment allows the reader to write these multitudes of slippages and losses; to recover them to non-paragrammatic writings that inevitably contain new ones. The paragramme of course links to entropy and the general drift towards randomness [...]"

entropy is a non-perceptible disposition, a production-as-a-loss outside of conscious intentionality." This may be a little excessive as well, but somewhere between Abulafia, Redfern and McCaffery, we might find fruitful areas of syncretic speculation about these aspects of our writing. The next logical step, it seems, is into the area of cacography and orthography (Silliman mentions in one of his books seeing a graffito that read "Fuk Speling", the tradition of cacography in a nutshell). If spelling becomes an area of improvisation, as it must if the letter becomes the unit of composition, we find ourselves able to work with paragrams in a very precise, and very expansive, fashion, to move for example through very specific considerations of the music which simultaneously produce vast resonant polysemous constructions. This also makes any text of any size, on any subject, a virtually infinite field for improvisation, sort of like the melody in a jazz standard which is then transformed into an entirely new musical exploration, Coltrane's various treatments of *My Favorite Things* being the best example I can think of off the top of my head. At this point, in a consideration of Coltrane's improvisations, we come full circle, back to the intentions of Abulafia's practice. This quote from Coltrane could be a continuation of Abulafia's project, almost, different man, different context, same fundamental aspiration: "My goal is to live the truly religious life, and express it in my music. If you live it, when you play there's no problem because the music is part of the whole thing. To be a musician is really something. It goes very, very deep. My music is the spiritual expression of what I am - my faith, my knowledge, my being." Maybe I'll add just one more from 'Trane, then call it quits for today (I just got a call from the plumber, who is on his way - again!): "I would like to put out an album with absolutely no notes. Just the titles of the songs

and the personnel. By this point I don't know what can be said in words about what I'm doing. Let the music speak for itself."

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***Jim Leftwich, letter, to Scott MacLeod***

1997

it's tricky to bring in analogies from jazz. definitely. but it seems to me that improvisation is useful, and accurate. you can set up a procedure for writing that is improvisational, just like setting up a procedure that is non-intentional, a chance operation. what i like about improvisation is the element of choice it allows, demands. i really don't like strict formulaic procedural work, and don't like writing that way, and i don't like chance either, except as an aspect of an improvisational process.

1997

***Jim Leftwich, letter, to Scott MacLeod***

1997

i can't find the typo "celar" in my copy of the essay. no matter. it's an excellent word, we should invent a definition for it.  
a couple of years ago tom taylor wrote me of someone being "a nonotic fuck".  
look it up, he said. i looked it up; not there. i thought of noetic, ontic

and even otic, but couldn't come up with the obvious non-otic. he had been looking at something, seems like something on a screen, and could only see the first part of non-something and the last part of something-otic (nonsense, despotic, whatever). there it was, a new word. it means "unhearing". shortly after i quit drinking i was sitting in my car in a parking lot, bent completely out of shape as always in those days, and when i looked at the building across the street i could see a sign painted on its side. but there was a telephone pole between my car and the sign. it was directly between me and the "o" of "Storage". so what i read seemed like an omen, a lesson, a revelation: St rage. my patron saint. i believed in him for 20 years before i knew his name. a few years later i came across bpnichol's *martyrology*. it's full of saints named after silly and/or revelatory puns. i suspect "celar" refers to that kind of clarity which is only available to us in the gloom of cellars.

***Jim Leftwich, letter to Scott MacLeod***

1997

intentionality no longer refers to content; it refers to craft. all constructions are intentional. content has always been too conflicted for intentionality, but we've only recently discovered and/or admitted this. if we can remove our need for control from the realm of content, we will be free to play within the constraints of craft. doesn't this sound like more fun than evangelism masquerading as art? omission of words is just the beginning. the good stuff happens when we begin to omit segments of the syntactical structure. the structure is there

with its empty slots; we can fill them with whatever we want. noun verb  
noun. noun adverb verb adjective noun. noun adverb verb adjective noun  
conjunction noun preposition noun. transformational grammar, recursion, the  
infinitely long sentence, the infinite variety of possible sentences. so we  
can omit conventionally necessary units or segments (predicates, for  
example), and we get a whole new infinite subset of the sentence, the  
sentence fragment, let's say. same goes for inversion or scrambling of  
component parts: still more infinite subsets. this is where  
meaning-building, and/or meaning-reception, gets destabilized, disrupted.  
subvert transformational grammar and you just might eventually get small but  
significant transformations of consciousness. "the limits of my language are  
the limits of my world" (wittgenstein). do we take this as a statement about  
vocabulary and denotation, or is it a statement about the conventional and  
habitual structures of language usage? i'd say the latter. subvert those  
structures and the boundaries of the world get bent, twisted, warped, before  
long you have a fractal coastline for a boundary, you get the infinite line  
contained within the finite area. it's not quite pascal's wager, but these  
are desperate times. lacan says "the real is the impossible". i think he's  
on to something.

predicates as palimpsests, the ghost in the syntax. the old maps no longer  
fit the territory. so we have to negotiate each sentence as if we're  
discovering the new world. before we can ask "what does this mean?" we have  
to ask "what is this?", "what is this doing?" this amounts to a liberation  
of the reader in that it undermines the authority of the author. that is, if  
the reader is willing to let go. some readers are happy in the musty old  
prison house of language.

indeterminacy of the gerund. the gerund is a fundamentally unstable form:

it's the noun emerging from its verbal chrysalis. it functions as a node from which instability can be distributed. the destabilized text will enact a destabilized reading. i call this progress.

sites of shifting: the pronoun, the anaphor with an ambiguous antecedent.

enallage: the use of one part of speech for another (e.g., putting a verb in the syntactical slot marked "noun", or vice versa).

hyphallage: syntactic displacement of modifiers, as when an adjective which might "naturally" modify one noun in a sentence is made to modify another in the same sentence. similar effects can be achieved with the other parts of speech.

grammatical correctness: one of the most important things we've learned of late is that usage determines correctness, not the other way around. today's solecism is tomorrow's convention.

"Tension, opposition, release in more than one direction." This should be the dictionary definition of polysemy.

Punctuation exists (1) so that we can score our rhythmic concerns, (2) so that we can destabilize relationships within semantic strings, (3) so that we can think in collisions and gaps rather than in linear sequences, (4) so that meaning might emerge as a constellated process rather than as a linear absolute.

The problem with characters or texts that are so conflicted that they have no agenda and therefore are neither tragic nor comedic (if we wish to read this as a problem - it's a matter of taste, aesthetics) is that they will be encountered as ironic. They will either be encountered as ironic, or as parodies of the romantic. I think we should resign ourselves to the ironic, and work to enlarge the area which this term can be made to address.

When a writing is centered on textual concerns, on craft, as opposed to

being content-centered, the language tends to gravitate, as if drawn by a strange attractor, to a sort of fractal basin of the ludicrous, the utterly incongruous. We encounter this kind of absurdity as humor - but it's an ironic sort of humor.

I think the problem is that a text has never had anything to say one way or the other about moral choice. The context of its reading, on the other hand, often has everything to say about moral choice. This is an aspect of conventional reading that the destabilized text might contest. The writing itself, if conceived as a plural, will enact a reading which excludes interpretation centered on moral concerns. Choice is cleared to become existential exigency; moral interpretations become an extraneous gloss. This leaves us with a new set of problems, but I think they're preferable to the old set.

The remainder, in Lecercle's terms, is that which the investigations of linguistics leaves out. It's the noise in the signal. It's paragram, homophony, paronomasia, word-play in all its forms. And it works against any individual attempt at controlling communication in language. It subverts the declarative sentence. It contests all considerations of clarity. It problematizes the very possibility of sincerity and authenticity. The question here is whether we speak through language or language speaks through us. The answer is probably "a little bit of both." But it only takes a little bit, a very little bit, of language speaking through us (which will mean adjacent to us, irrelevant to us, against us, etc), for our cherished illusion of control to fracture and shatter around us. If we're not in complete control of what we are saying, we are not in control at all. We can't be certain of having any of our language received as we intend it. The crux of Lecercle's argument is that language seems to structurally generate

what we would normally call forms of word-play. It comes with the territory. Certainty, clarity, and communication do not come with the territory. There is certainly no trace of narrative in the *Anne* writings. But, and I think this is important, there is only the barest of traces in *The Sasha Poems*. Narrative in *The Sasha Poems* is an illusion. There's no narrative there.

Vocabulary, word choice, diction is finally the primary fact that differentiates two authors. It isn't personal experience. It isn't a code of ethics. Basically, it's vocabulary, and punctuation. There are some other spices in the pot, but these are the meat and potatoes.

Dialogue in *The Sasha Poems* is all mirrors and lights. There really is no significant dialogue there. It's a framing device, foregrounded as such. Blink and it disappears. It's artifice, pure text. As dialogue, it has no substance whatsoever (this is even more clearly the case in *The Desire Notebooks*). The *Anne* text goes one step further and removes the frame entirely. Most of my recent writing goes even further, probably too far (cf. *The Passion of Indifference*), and dispenses with everything except the confrontation with itself: writing as writing is writing.



## Jack Foley

<http://www.cprw.com/Foley/zukofsky.htm>

In any case, “Language” in one form or another is definitely at the center of Zukofsky’s work, and translation is a major element of his use of language. If James Joyce had an uneasy relationship to the oppressor language, English, so did Louis Zukofsky, whose parents spoke only Yiddish. Charles Bernstein writes, “For Catullus, the Zukofskys developed a technique that has come to be called homophonic translation—translation with special emphasis on the sound rather the lexical meaning.” The purpose of such translation, writes Mark Scroggins in “A Biographical Essay on Zukofsky” is “‘to breathe the “literal” meaning’ of the Latin original, adhering as closely as possible to the sounds and rhythms of Catullus, and letting the meaning take a distant back seat.” Scroggins’ comments are accurate and helpful, but there are many moments in Catullus when Zukofsky deliberately chooses “lexical meaning” over sound. The opening line of Catullus 3, “Lugete, o Veneres Cupidinesque,” is not sonically very close to the opening line of Zukofsky’s version: “Lament, o graves of Venus, and Cupids.” Zukofsky’s version of the poem is in fact a more or less literal translation, though with some interesting added attractions. This is the supposedly “literal” Loeb Classical Library version of the poem; it was written by F.W. Cornish:

Mourn, ye Graces and Loves, and all you whom the Graces love. My lady’s sparrow is dead, the sparrow my lady’s pet, whom she loved more than her very eyes; for honey-sweet he was, and knew his mistress as well as a girl knows her own mother. Nor would he stir from her lap, but hopping now here, now there, would still chirp to

his mistress alone. Now he goes along the dark road, thither whence they say no one returns. But curse upon you, cursed shades of Orcus, which devour all pretty things! My pretty sparrow, you have taken him away. Ah, cruel! Ah, poor little bird! All because of you my lady's darling eyes are heavy and red with weeping.

This is Zukofsky's version (not included in the Selected Poems):

Lament, o graces of Venus, and Cupids,  
and cry out loud, men beloved by Her graces.  
Pass here, it's dead, meant so much to my girl, the  
sparrow, the jewel that delighted my girl,  
that lovable in her eyes she loved them less:  
like honey so sweet he was sure to know her,  
with her ever as a girl's with her mother;  
not seizing a moment to stray from her lap,  
silly crazy to hop up here and down there,  
one endless solo to his only goddess.  
Who now? it's hard to walk thru tenebrous flume  
down there, where it is granted not one comes back.  
On you be the curse of the blind and dead shade  
Orcus, hell that destroys all beautiful things:  
so you stole my beautiful sparrow from me.  
Why pick evil? why my little fool sparrow  
It's your doing—my girl's own, darling's sweet  
excellent eyes a little swollen and red.

“Pass here” is Zukofsky's version of the Latin “passer,” sparrow, a word which

may have reversed some of its letters as it found its way into English. (Another example would be the Greek “morph”—m sound at the beginning, f sound at the end—which became the English “form”—f sound at the beginning, m sound at the end.)

1/ Zukofsky’s “one endless solo to his only goddess” is a marvelous transmutation of Catullus’s “ad solam dominam usque pipiabat” and far better than the Loeb version of the line. In addition, Zukofsky’s word “goddess” may be a kind of historical joke. The Latin word for “lord” is dominus. The corresponding female word is domina, the word Catullus uses. The two words would be accurately translated into English as “lord” and “lady,” as in “the lady of the house” or, as the Loeb translation has it, “mistress.” With Christianity, the word dominus took on the meaning of “God,” as in the Latin Mass: “Dominus vobiscum,” “The Lord be with you.” Zukofsky’s translation is perhaps the only example in English of a corresponding change of meaning for domina. If dominus means god, shouldn’t domina mean goddess? Another marvelous Zukofsky translation occurs in Catullus 115. Catullus calls his acquaintance Mamurra “Mentula.” “Mentula” is used here as a proper noun, but the joke is that the word means “penis.” The Loeb translation, acutely aware of propriety, translates the word only as a proper noun and leaves it at that. Peter Whigham’s translation is more accurate: “Mentula” becomes “O’Toole.” But Zukofsky clearly gets the prize: in his version “Mentula” becomes “Meantool.” (“Non homo sed vero mentula magna minax” becomes “known homo said hero Meantool a man gnawn mean ax.”)



## Ron Silliman

<http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/melnick/Silliman-on-Melnick.pdf>

*Men in Aida*, a three-part project of which only the first volume has appeared in book form (Tuumba, 1983), is a homophonic translation of *The Iliad*, but with a difference. Where Zukofsky's *Catullus*, the mother of this genre of miming the sound of an alien text, aims at capturing also the basic spirit, if not always the figurative and narrative frames, of its source material, Men finds a radically new tale in Homer's phonemes. Thus *Men in Aida*'s opening stanza —

Men in Aida, they appeal, eh? A day, O Achilles!  
Allow men in, emery Achaians. All gay ethic, eh?  
Paul asked if tea mousse suck, as Aida, pro, yaps in.  
Here on a Tuesday. 'Hell,' Rhea to cake Eunice in.  
'Hojo' noisy tap as hideous debt to lay at a bully.  
Ex you, day. Tap wrote a 'D,' a stay. Tenor is Sunday.  
Atreides stain axe and Ron and ideas 'll kill you.

— is rendered more literally by Michael Reck as:

Sing, Goddess, Achilles' maniac rage:  
ruinous thing! it roused a thousand sorrows  
and hurled many souls of mighty warriors  
to Hades, made their bodies food for dogs  
and carrion birds — as Zeus's will foredoomed—  
from the time relentless strife came between  
Atreus' son, a king, and brave Achilles.

Reck attempts to convey the taut warp of Homer's line by shortening it in English. Melnick's version careens from syllable to syllable, capturing the dance of the phonemes with remarkable exactness — to hear Melnick read the work aloud is an unforgettable experience – but with virtually no interest in the “story” as such. Instead, themes emerge from the syllabic stream that very quickly make apparent that Men is, in the most literal sense, a ludic gay utopia:

Ought a Paw tempt ya? Air rib bowl. Lucky beau tea a nay Rae.  
Cartoned ale lay. Sand tape a.m. Allah, Paul, a Metaxa.  
Urea Tess key you into the lass at ache ace saw.  
All as oil mega-night days am is poem math. Offer a suck. I raise.  
Team men are new men. Noe Menelaus sort o' coo. No! Pa!  
Prose Trojans. Toe nudie met a tray. Pee owed a leg is ace.  
Guy dame! Oy gay Roz out owes a fairy say thigh a pay lays.  
O ape pee Paula Moe gay sad do sand dame I who yes a guy own.  
Ooh men soy pot, eh? Is son echo gay?



**Robert Kelly**

footnote to *Path Moss*

pp. 115 - 116, Chain 4, 1996

Constraints

working with Holderlin's text, trying to hear it in English.

As English. The point of the homoeophonic: to hear the other as own.

Keep listening. "In an unfamiliar tongue there are no commonplaces. " [William Weaver, "A Tent in this World. "]

Baptism by hearing.

So that: one proposes to hear a 'foreign' poem as if it were, as it is, in one's own language.

The methodology is obvious, intimate, exact: listen.

Listen till you hear. Listen till you hear your own.

Your own comes to you from the ends of the earth.

Here there is no hegemony, no appropriation of the humiliated original text, no bluster of meaning, no flag-waving of accuracy, no fascism of 'what it really means.'

Instead, the substantial energy of one poem, in all the lucidity of its sound and form, generates a resultant structure in your hearing, another poem, and you hear.

And what you hear, you write. Write it down, just as mother taught you to do.

We're chained by what we hear, liberated by what we speak.

"Write the poem. The poem unlocks hell." [Jerome Rothenberg, ca. 1960] Unlocks it by writing a door and going through.

Language is a prison, writing is a door.

And so on.

As to the homoeophonic (not homophonic, not same sound, but like sound, like enough, just like enough to get something started):

It is all too easy to use the homoeophonic energy to make jokes and parodies: Ernst Jandl's *Wordsworth*, *Mots d'Heures Gousse Rames* and so forth as well as my own infantine nasty parody of a poem by Horace I wrote in teenage sarcastic sneerology, I remember it ended" ... and with Vitalis comb my hair," so that the first homoeophonic translation I ever saw was one I did by myself, as a mean revenge on an unloved Latin author whose smugness still irritates me, lovely as I have come to find his docile measures. (Horace is the only ancient poet who went to Harvard.)

But to use the homoeophonic power to make poems not funny, not sarcastic, not even playfully amusing--poems of which no Mussolini will ever say, Ma questo e ...

divertente.

The point is: to hear a poem that means, a poem that is as serious as the causal poem. Causal and resultant poems-that's a better way than 'original' and 'translation.'

Louis Zukofsky here (as so many elsewheres in our poetics) showed the way with his brilliant, alive, accurate, preposterous translations of Catullus, sound by sound into our souls . . . if we but listen.

So that's what I set out to do with Holderlin, 'my' favorite 'German' poet. I chose the great hymn The Source of the Danube, both for its rigorous onrush of energy and for the tumult of reflection, if I may call it that, that makes a relatively short ode so rich with philosophical and formal arousals.

All that Americans have to know, I think, about the Holderlin ode and my vulnerable audition of it ("Unquell the Dawn Now") is that the Danube River rises in the Black Forest and flows east and south across all of central Europe and at length passes into the Black Sea-its waters come to lap the shores of Asia.

Five years or so later (a good Roman lustrum) I turned to the longer hymn called "Patmos," by which I had long been fascinated-to the extent of writing various poems of my 'own' so titled or so concerned. The resultant poem, "Path Moss," is finally finished.

The great moment comes when you begin to read and study the resultant poem that has come to expression through your ardent listening. You are studying a text that no one wrote. It is pure Revelation, a true and urgent Niemandsrose of the mind. Here,

more than anywhere I know in all of literature, here is the embodiment of what we can learn by the act of writing.

24 October 1996

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**Jerome Rothenberg**

*Total Translation* (1969)

"Translation is carry-over. It is a means of delivery & a bringing to life. It begins with a forced change of language, but a change too that opens up the possibility of greater understanding. Everything in these song-poems is finally translatable: words, sounds, voice, melody, gesture, event, etc., in the reconstitution of a unity that would be shattered by approaching each element in isolation. A full & total experience begins it, which only a total translation can fully bring across."

"Seneca poetry, when it uses words at all, works in sets of short songs, minimal realizations colliding with each other in marvelous ways, a very light, very pointed play-of-the-mind, nearly always just a step away from the comic (even as their masks are), the words set out in clear relief against the ground of the ("meaningless") refrain. Clowns stomp & grunt through the longhouse, but in subtler ways too the encouragement to "play" is always a presence. Said the leader of the longhouse at

Allegany, explaining why the seasonal ceremonies ended with a gambling game: the idea of a religion was to reflect the total order of the universe while providing an outlet for all human needs, the need for play not least among them. Although it pretty clearly doesn't work out as well nowadays as that makes it sound — the orgiastic past & the "doings" (happenings) in which men were free to live-out their dreams dimming from generation to generation — still the resonance, the ancestral permission, keeps being felt in many ways."



### **Jerome Rothenberg**

*Translation as Composition / Composition as Translation* (2004)

Many writers, but poets in particular, inherit and carry forward the works of those who came before them. In my own case the work I've done with ethnopoeitics and with the construction of anthology-assemblages—along with a devotion to the “experimental” as a basis for my writing—has made such considerations still more central to my practice. Accordingly my work has involved not only translation but the use of techniques like collage and appropriation as ways of opening our individual or personal poetry to the presence of other voices and other visions besides our own. I came to think of all of that—appropriation, collage, translation—in ideological terms.

Through me many long dumb voices,  
Voices of the interminable generations of prisoners and slaves,  
Voices of the diseas'd and despairing and of thieves and dwarfs,  
Voices of cycles of preparation and accretion,  
And of the threads that connect the stars, and of wombs and of the  
father-stuff,  
And of the rights of them the others are down upon,  
Of the deform'd, trivial, flat, foolish, despised,  
Fog in the air, beetles rolling balls of dung.  
...

This was in the section of *Leaves of Grass* called “Song of Myself”—that great bringing together of the individual voice with the sense of a total and suppressed humanity. And it was reborn for us, for me certainly, in Charles Olson’s rant, say, against “the lyrical interference of the individual as ego,” or in Robert Duncan’s call for a new “symposium of the whole,” a new “totality”—among my immediate predecessors and near contemporaries.



**Jerome Rothenberg**

From *The New Delta Interview (Part Two): Translating, Sequencing, Performing*

Interviewers: Brooke Champagne, Hillary Major, & Mike Walter

(2004)

Q: When you read from *Shaking the Pumpkin*, you mentioned that there's only one word underlying the four words from the song-poem "the animals are coming."

A: In the opening song of the ritual poems that I translated, there's only one word in the Seneca – a word that means something like "come" or "coming." But it's got a number of syllables, five syllables to be exact. "Coming" would be two syllables; "come" would be one syllable. That's a little bit of the problem in translating it – particularly when I come to sing it in English. To the Senecas, I assume it's quite clear what the coming refers to, what the arriving refers to – the sacred animals being called to join the ceremony. But the translator in English has several options – both for sound and meaning. The first possibility is "they are coming," or to get it down more precisely, "the animals are coming." That's a question that comes up in translation: how much should you add by way of explanation to a text? How faithful, how minimal or maximal, should a translation be?

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from

**Translating Translating Apollinaire:  
A Preliminary Report**

*by*

*bpNichol*

<http://www.thing.net/~grist/l&d/bpnichol/lnichol1.htm>

**AN INTRO(CYBER)DUCTION**

In the fall of 1977, bpNichol showed me some sections of Translating Translating Apollinaire, in part because we had discussed projects that both of us were working on that related to TTA 26. I proposed that we do two separate books, one of selections from TTA 26, and one for other parts of the work. It took us some time to work out what to use and how to reproduce it in print. The poems presented here are those that seem to make the transition to the web without problems.

During the time we were going through the manuscript, bp began asking people if they'd like to participate in TTA 29 (some had already participated in other sections, such as TTA 20). We intended this to be the first in a series of "reports," and bp included an invitation to participate in his introduction. We discussed a number of ways of including other participatory sections in further volumes, including the alter-and-pass-on and alter-and-return type familiar to people in the mailart network. We received several of the TTA 29 type before bp's death in 1988, and I have received several since then.

I doubt that many of bp's friends have fully come to terms with his absence, even after 8 years. I don't think I ever will. Perhaps cyberspace is precisely where the participatory sections should continue. Stay tuned.

Karl Young

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## AN INT(O)RO(NTO)DUCTION

May 27th 1975 en route from London England to Toronto with Gerry Gilbert (we'd both been at the 8th International Sound Poetry Festival) in a mood of dissatisfaction re certain aspects of my writing (always the feeling there is more one should be learning - more limitations one should be pushing against & breaking down) i began this present series. In my mind was the idea of a pure bit of research one in which the creativity would be entirely at the level of the research, of formal inventiveness, and not at the level of content per se i.e. i recalled the first poem i had ever had published -- Translating Apollinaire in Bill Bissett's *BLEW OINTMENT* magazine circa 1964 (i'd written the poem in summer 1963 during my first period in Toronto) - & decided to put that poem thru as many translation/ transformation processes as i & other people could think of. I conceived of it as an open ended, probably unpublishable in its entirety, piece. As of this date (August 29, 1978) i have elaborated 55 different systems & or results with TTA 16, 26, 27, 29, 31, 34, 35, 36, 37, 40, 41, 50, 54, 55 & some other tentative ideas still not fully executed. But it seemed a good point in time, particularly when Karl Young expressed his enthusiasm & support, to issue a preliminary report on discoveries made in terms of the results

arrived at. Thus this present selection from the inevitably titled TRANSLATING TRANSLATING APOLLINAIRE.

The pieces included here begin with the three memory translations written over the atlantic ocean on May 27th. TTA 4 is the original poem as published in 1964 & all the pieces that follow are based on TTA 4. The title of the original poem comes from the fact that i was, during its writing, translating Apollinaire & the line "soleil cou coupe" comes from his poem, ZONE, the one i was working on. TTA 31 (unpublished here) includes elements from my 1963 translation.

In choosing the pieces for this preliminary report we excluded all the unfinished ones except TTA 29. We excluded those that were overly long (TTA 20, 21, 22 & 52) as well as the systems that were in any case summarized in TTA 51. TTA 23, 24 & 25 depended for their understanding on a familiarity with unpublished essays from my PROBABLE SYSTEMS series, & TTA 34 upon a knowledge of my NEGATIVES series, & could not be included here without extensive notes that would've made the size of the book unwieldy.

Hence, roughly speaking, this preliminary report. Other reports will be issued from time to time over the years as pieces are finished &/or opportunities to publish them become available. I'd like to particularly thank the writers included in TTA 29 for contributing their research results & both the three writers included in TTA, & the 24 not included here, that participated in the tests that form the basis for TTA 20 & 21. Any writer who wishes to submit a version of TTA 4 for inclusion in TTA 29 is invited to do so & can reach me c/o Membrane Press.

bpNichol

TTA 4: original version

Icharrus winging up

Simon the Magician    from Judea    high in a tree,  
everyone reaching for the sun

                    great towers of stone  
built by the Aztecs, tearing their hearts out  
to offer them, wet and beating

                    mountains,  
cold wind, Macchu Piccu hiding in the sun  
unfound for centuries

cars whizzing by, sun  
thru trees passing, a dozen  
new wave films, flickering  
on drivers' glasses

flat on their backs in the grass  
a dozen bodies slowly turning brown

sun glares off the pages, "soleil  
cou coupé", rolls in my window  
flat on my back on the floor  
becoming aware of it

for an instant

TTA 13: sound translation

hick or ass    wan king cup,  
Samantha my chess yen    front chew deo    hyena tory,  
heavy Juan    Gris chin guffaw earth son

Greta hours office tone  
bill to buy Thea's texts, terrier hard stout  
two hover then, whet tongue bee sting

mound stains,  
coal do in, my cool prick you high din Gunther's hum  
infant fur scent you trees

coarse wheeze imbibes, un-  
true trespassing, adders in  
hue weave fill hums, full lick her ring  
under arrive hearse skull asses

fool Aton the heir buxom digress  
add ozone bodice slow lead earning brow and

sunk lair soft deep ages, "soil hay

coo coop hey", roil sin mi win dough

Phaedon may balk honda four  
beacon Inca wary fit  
foreign instinct

TTA 1: memory translation (order of recall)

TTA 2: restructuring TTA 1 according to recalled order

TTA 3: treating TTA 1 as the first draft of  
a new poem & revising.

TTA 5: re-arranging words in poem in alphabetical order

TTA 7: re-arranging letters alphabetically

TTA 9: replacing words with words of same length  
using Ferguson's STANDARD CORPUS

TTA 10: replacing words with synonyms  
using Roget's INTERNATIONAL THESAURUS

TTA 11: re-arranging TTA 4 according to word length

TTA 12: re-arranging letters in each word alphabetically

TTA 17: acrostic translation

from TTA 18: 10 views: view 1: walking east along the  
northern boundary looking south

from TTA 18: 10 views: view 5: walking west along the  
southern boundary looking north

from TTA 18: 10 views: view 6: walking north along the  
eastern boundary looking west

from TTA 18" 10 views: view 9: labyrinthine view  
beginning in the interior & walking out

from TTA 18: 10 views: view 10: labyrinthine view  
beginning on the exterior & walking in

TTA 19: replacing words with their meanings using  
Webster's DICTIONARY FOR EVERYDAY USE

TTA 49: replacing words with their antonyms using  
THE NEW AMERICAN ROGET'S COLLEGE THESAURUS

|||||

**Ian MacFadyen**

*Magic Amulet / Silence to Say Goodbye*

<http://realitystudio.org/scholarship/a-trip-from-here-to-there/excursus/>

In *The Ticket That Exploded* there's an acknowledgement from Burroughs: "The

closing message is by Brion Gysin." This message takes Burroughs' cut-up phrase "silence to say goodbye" from the final paragraph of the text, and re-cuts and effectively permutes it vertically through five lines — "To say good silence by / Good to say by silence / By silence to say good / good good / Bye." The phrases are handwritten versions of the printed phrase on the opposite page, and these lines in English are then alternated with lines of Gysin's calligraphy — suggesting the transposition of alphabetical letters into pure script, as in a phrasebook guide to a foreign language, except here the calligraphy, though graphically it seems to echo parts of the English script, cannot itself be deciphered and so cannot be spoken — it is a silent writing which can only be "read" in silence, dematerializing the alphabetic and removing the phonetic. The original phrase taken from Burroughs' text, and Gysin's permutations of it, literally "say goodbye" — in accord with Burroughs' preferred way of ending a book with a series of goodbyes from the characters, such as "Ladies and gentlemen, these our actors bid you a long last good night." In Gysin's calligraphic epilogue, the textual "goodbye" itself physically, graphically dematerializes, fading out, the script bidding adieu to the alphabetic / phonetic language of Burroughs' book and by extension signalling an apparently terminal farewell to all referential, potentially spoken discourse. This single-page text embodies the idea of learning to read (and think) in silence, and its dual strategy of calligraphy and permutation is crucially combined with a third form of writing — that of the magical amulet, a protective written script worn by cabalists and mentioned by Daniel Defoe in his *Journal of the Plague Year* (1722). It was believed that the evil spirits, thought to reside in certain words or letter permutations, like "ABRACADABRA," could be ritually exorcised by systematically permuting the letters of the words. These permutations were configured in triangular and cross and diamond shapes, the symmetrical visual forms of the texts created by the systematic removal of letters, line by line — "ABRACADABRA / BRACADABR / RACADAB /

ACADA / CAD / A.” Gysin wrote that

The permutations discovered me — because permutations of course have been around for a long time; in the whole magic world permutations are part of the Cabalistic secret . . . the Divine Tautology.

The amulet lies at the heart of Gysin’s permutations, it is the ancient magical device which Gysin and Ian Sommerville computerized — making the machine function magically, employing the binary system for a supernatural purpose. Gysin’s message at the end of *The Ticket That Exploded* is composed in the form of an X, a Hex sign, in which two triangular-shaped texts meet, point to point, in the center of the page — X. This visual geometric form is composed and delineated by script — that is, the image is created through the arrangement of written and calligraphic lines and letters.

Gysin’s Hex X is an hermetic, cabbalistic image which traditionally represented the meeting of earth and spirit — “As above, so below.” A similar form was also used in Taoist magic charms to protect the body from evil (yin) influences — such graphic amulets were calligraphically composed on colored papers, and would subsequently be burned, the destruction of the calligraphic spell being part of the magical process. The lower, rising, aspirant triangle of Gysin’s X is clearly distinguished from the descending triangle — the decipherable words in the top triangle appear to become purely calligraphic in the inverted triangle below, the alphabetical words distorted in an inverted reflection. The inversion suggests an unreadable reversal — so that the X symbol may connote “As above, so not below,” distinguishing and separating the earthly and the spiritual, with the spiritual, dematerialized, non-referential part of the diagram in the lower, not the higher half of the equation. But on closer inspection it’s possible to make out parts of letters in the apparently abstract calligraphy below — we can make out approximations of the “g” and “y” of “goodbye,” the “b” and “y” of

“bye” ... But then we see the signature in the lower right, “BG,” and recognise that these implicit calligraphic letter-parts belong equally to the name “Brion Gysin” (or “gysin”) — morphed and distended through his calligraphic signature motif, suggestive manifestations of his “bean sprout” script, Gysin’s initials turning into script but also seemingly echoing elements of the original English phrases. Looking back at the higher triangle we can now re-read the lines in English in a different way: “To say good silence bg / Good to say bg silence / Bg silence to say good / good good / Bge.” In fact, we can transpose the two readings, and even superimpose and alternate them — now one, now the other. In addition to recognizing the equivocation between Gysin’s initials and the original words, and working with it, we can now look at the alternating calligraphic lines in the upper triangle which again reveal Gysin’s signature initials . . . but as in the lower triangle, these are fractured, inchoate, turn into lines which may be felt but not linguistically transposed. It is truly the “Silent Writing of Brion Gysin,” as Burroughs called it, and it is so in a triple sense — Gysin wrote it, his name is hidden “silently” in the script, and it is a primer for learning to read and think in silence, non-phonetically, without articulating the sounds of letters. We may still see and read and say aloud or voice internally that “Bee” of “B” and that “gee” of “g,” but these initials and their sounds are stages in a process of undoing and resisting alphabetic decipherment, scriptural referentiality, and phonetic signification — a calligraphic unravelling of linguistic constructs, a process of learning to see whilst unlearning the act of automatic reading.



from **JOHN M. BENNETT, INNOVATIVE, EXPERIMENTAL AND UNIQUE**

*by Ivan Argüelles (2014)*

Perhaps the most experimental of his linguistic innovations is his *Sole das & Prime Sway* (2012). *Sole das* is a complete transduction (not translation) of the long poem *Soledades* by the great siglo de oro poet Luís de Góngora. The original Spanish text is considered by many to be a high point in Spanish poetry, but it is a very complex work involving a rich, erudite vocabulary and an intricate Latin word order, which make the poem difficult to decipher. Bennett's transduction takes the Spanish text by rendering word for word an English homonym (or something close to it) to represent the original Spanish word. It is interesting the extent to which it also "feels" like a translation, which it is not. This intricate and faithful-to-the-original (homophonically speaking) "translation" will surely find its place among the major experiments in contemporary poetry. Of the companion piece in that publication, *Prime Sway*, a transduction of Sor Juana's *Primer Sueño*, Bennett says he wrote it "pretending I don't know Spanish and writing it out (reading it) as if it were English."



from **Four questions about asemic writing**

Marco Giovenale: Anthologies, exhibits and web pages collect very different kinds of asemic works. Some of them resemble scribbles and calligraphy, so they fit the definition of "writing". Others do not, since they include recognizable letters and symbols, or abstract art. Do you think asemics can include these areas or not?

Jim Leftwich: In my experience, asemic writing begins with text. The text is subjected

to a series of processes. Some processes are recombinative, others are subtractive, others are improvisational and associational. A text is a mutagen when fed to itself repeatedly. In my experience, the origins of asemic calligraphy are in the shapes of the printed letters. The poem had already long ago broken the word into its syllables. We can say as a kind of historical shorthand that Marinetti broke the syllable into its letters -- and from the Italian Futurists to zaum, and on to Zurich, only 1909 to 1916 so far in this story, then out of that war and into the next, out and into Isou, and everything begins to unravel and replicate, concrete, constellations, the mimeo revolution (THE MIMEO REVOLUTION!)... to too much of everything, everywhere, all the time... the road of excess leads to the road of excess... Marinetti's parole in liberta as ornaments in our immersive environments... on billboards... on buses... on t-shirts... Text, even radical, avant-garde text, has become a weapon in the war against us, in our wars against ourselves... in the end was the word, and the word was SHIT. What to do in such a wor(l)d? Well, we have thought, some of those among us, more times than we can count, that maybe the time has come to wage war against the weapons, against the weapons being used against us... So, this is how we come to the current configurations of the concept of asemic writing... We were thinking about creating a temporary autonomous zone deep in the crevices of our minds... and then we were thinking about taking it to the streets. The practice of asemic writing was to have been a small part of our training manual. ((2015))  
<http://scriptjr.nl/four-questions-about-asemic-writing-05-jim-leftwich/3361#.VrEW5dUrLIV>

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**Retorico Unentesi,**

**DRAFT FOR THE SHORT MANIFESTO**

the past is an extreme of breath. each dream interprets us in the direction of an abyss. causation on behalf of the word is perhaps a familiar home for poetry, it is a matter of remembering revolution as a critique of certain boundary, but the poet as angelic resolution plays practice to the language of social margins. of necessity each avant-garde is militantly of the spirit.

10.15.01

p. 501

<https://ia601205.us.archive.org/18/items/TheTextasifsuchBlueLion2005/>

[The%20Textasifsuch%20-%20Blue%20Lion%202005.pdf](https://ia601205.us.archive.org/18/items/TheTextasifsuchBlueLion2005/)

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Roanoke, Virginia